

Children Missing from Education: Policy & Procedure

Children & Young People / Education

Date	Version	Comments	Approved by
Oct 2011	1.0	New Policy produced.	Children & Family Support Management Team (20 th October 2011)
Aug 2014	1.1	Policy reviewed to reflect new structure: Section 1.0: removed reference to Every Child Matters agenda. Section 3.0: amended to reflect that Schools should check the lost pupil database themselves.	Children, Young People & Families Management Team (4 th Sept 2014)
Nov 2016	1.2	Policy reviewed in light of the revised statutory DFE guidance Sept 2016.	
July 2021	1.3	Policy reviewed	Education & Children's Social Care Leadership Team (22 nd July 2021)
July 2022	1.4	Policy reviewed	Education & Children's Social Care Leadership Team (28 th July 2022)

This policy is to be reviewed annually.

This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up to date Policy. This system is used on all Wolverhampton City Council – Children, Young People and Families Policies and Procedures.

CONSULTATION

The following people have been consulted on this policy:

- **Attendance & Inclusion Service Manager**
- **Attendance Team Manager**
- **Senior Education Welfare Officers**

PURPOSE

The Purpose of this Policy is to prevent children and young people that are of compulsory school age from missing education.

EQUALITY ANALYSIS

An equality analysis has been undertaken on this policy and procedure contact Rachel Warrender ([rachel.warrender@wolverhampton.gov.uk/\(01902\)554174](mailto:rachel.warrender@wolverhampton.gov.uk/(01902)554174)) for a copy.

This Policy does not apply to children whose attendance as 'registered' pupils is causing concern or those who are also missing from home or care – these are covered by other procedures.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to inform local authority officers, headteachers/principals, governing bodies and all members of the children's workforce in Wolverhampton about the procedures to be followed in order to prevent children from becoming 'missing from education'. It relates to procedures for ensuring that children of compulsory school age do not go missing from education, not to those children whose attendance as "registered" pupils" is causing concern or those who are also missing from home or care, who are covered by other procedures. It should be read in conjunction with the following Department for Education guidance:

- Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance September 2016
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2021
- School Attendance May 2022
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended),
- Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England September 2017
- School 2 School Common Transfer File (STF) Guidance July 2019
- Elective Home Education Departmental Guidance for Local Authorities April 2019

The City of Wolverhampton Council acknowledges that it is a key responsibility of the local authority and its schools to promote the educational achievement of all the children resident in the City or attending its schools. The best way to promote the best outcomes for all children is to ensure, consistent with parental preference that as far as possible children of compulsory school age are either on a school roll (Admission Register) or known to be educated "otherwise".

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of children and to share information appropriately. This principal underpins this policy and there is an expectation that all agencies and professionals across the children's workforce will work together to ensure that children are participating in education.

There is now considerable research available which identifies the points at which children are most at risk of becoming missing from education. The most common reasons include:

- Frequent moves of house including periods of homelessness or in a refuge
- Family breakdown, disrupted parenting and coming into care
- Exclusion from school
- Parents withdrawing the pupil or them 'being asked to leave' without correct procedures being followed
- Children from specific vulnerable groups such as travellers, asylum-seekers, refugees and recent arrivals in the City
- Children who are said to be "home educated" but who are not actually engaging in education

The costs of missing out on education are very high indeed, both to the young people and their families, and to society as a whole. Children who do not engage in education are unlikely to gain any qualifications and a fractured educational history can result in low levels of functional literacy and numeracy in adult life.

In September 2016 the Department for Education issued revised statutory guidance around Children Missing Education. The guidance places a greater emphasis on Schools and Local Authorities to work together to ensure children & young people do not miss out on the education to which they are entitled.

It has also been shown that missing out on school can have a significant impact on other aspects of adult life:

- unemployment
- homelessness
- criminal or other anti-social behaviour
- involvement in prostitution and the sex trade
- involvement with substance abuse
- teenage parenthood
- mental health difficulties, low self-esteem
- physical health difficulties (including health issues linked to poverty)

2.0 CME PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOLS

2.1 Children of compulsory school age who have not arrived at a school when they were expected.

Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. All schools must notify the local authority within 5 days of placing the child on the Register either electronically or by completing the on-register form that is located in the information pack for schools

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school must establish the reason for the absence and mark the attendance register accordingly.

A school must not remove a child's name from the register where the start date has been agreed but they have failed to attend without first establishing the reason why or by instigating a CME enquiry.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the school will make contact (telephone, written and visits) with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details. If investigation fails to ascertain the whereabouts of the family, the School should complete the City of Wolverhampton CME referral form along with a copy of the school register showing the pupils absence using the [CME webform](#). This must be completed within 10 working days of the agreed start date for the child or young person. Once these have been received the local authority will commence their CME investigation procedures. For further information, please refer to the [City of Wolverhampton Council CME website](#).

2.2 Off-registration of registered pupils of compulsory school age

All schools (including academies and independent schools) must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at standard transition points or when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school – unless the local authority requests that such returns are to be made.

When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include evidence that reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts have been made.

When the whereabouts of a child is unclear or unknown, it is reasonable to expect that the school will make contact (telephone, written and visits) with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details. If investigation fails to ascertain the whereabouts of the family the School should complete the City of Wolverhampton CME webform via the City of Wolverhampton Council website which can be found [here](#).

If the pupil is located, the School must notify the local authority immediately.

Once the local authority Designated Children Missing from Education (CME) Officer has concluded their investigations, the School will be notified of the outcome and confirmation of whether the local authority agree that the child or young person can be removed from role and added to the lost pupil data base.

4.0 THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

It is the LA's statutory responsibility to ensure that all school aged children are in receipt of suitable and efficient education appropriate to their age, aptitude and ability, whether at school or otherwise.

The LA's investigations will treat each case on its merits and will use their judgement ensuring they have taken into account all off the facts of the case. The following areas, where appropriate, should be considered:

- Make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details;
- Check local databases within the local authority;
- Check school2school (s2s) systems;
- Follow local information sharing arrangements and where possible make enquiries via other local databases and agencies including those of housing providers, school admissions, health services, police, refuge, Youth Justice Services, children's social care, and HMRC;
- check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and/or the Border Force, where available;

- check with agencies known to be involved with family;
- check with local authority and school from which child moved originally, if known;
- check with any local authority and school to which a child may have moved;
- check with the local authority where the child lives, if different from where the school is;
- In the case of children of Service Personnel, check with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS); and home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.
- Check with commissioned data recording systems for out of City placements (Commissioned provider).

5.0 NOTIFICATIONS FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Notifications from other local authority can be made via our CME webform which can be found [here](#).

Process for receiving notifications is as follows:

1. A check will be undertaken to see if an application for a School place has been received on the ONE system.
2. Where an application for a school place has not been received, the CME Officer will be allocated. This will be logged on the centralised Capita One database. Where an application has been received the referrer will be notified.
3. When the CME officer is allocated, they will be responsible for liaising with the parents/family in assisting them to apply for a School place. Where parents do not apply for a school place then the process to issue a School Attendance Order (SOA) will commence.

Where enquiries are made to the School Admissions Team to see if a school place has been applied for then the School Admissions Team will undertake a search on ONE. If an application has been made, they will notify the referrer. If no application is recorded then they will notify the CME Officer.

6.0 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

This arrangement applies to Children and young people in care as for any other child or young person (both those who are in the care of the local authority). The Virtual School Team, under the management of the Virtual School Head, promotes the educational attainment and progress of children and young people in care as part of the duty towards those for whom Wolverhampton City Council is a "corporate parent". The team is also able to offer limited help and advice with children in care, living in Wolverhampton from other areas and children previously in care. Children and Young People in Care are regularly tracked and monitored by the team, with school

admission and attendance being a major factor in this work. The team (in the context of CME) is able to help and advise social workers, designated teachers and foster carers with regard to school admission and attendance and ensure that children and young people in care are engaged in education. While the Virtual School will address some of the particular challenges facing this cohort, the CME Officer will still need to provide support as for other children if there are attendance problems to be addressed.

7.0 OTHER PROFESSIONALS / AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

It may initially be any professional or agency working with children or parents who becomes aware that a child of compulsory school age does not appear to be engaging in any form of education. If so, it is that person's responsibility to ensure that the child is identified and referred to the CME Officer so that further investigation can be carried out. Such professionals and agencies include:

- Social care workers (community and residential)
- Community and hospital health workers (including those who work with adults but where there are also children in the household)
- Specialist support agencies such as those working with asylum-seekers and refugees, pregnant schoolgirls, travellers and other vulnerable groups
- The Police
- Youth Offending Team
- Connexions
- Housing and homeless workers (both statutory and voluntary)
- Voluntary agencies and services for children and families
- Parents support and advisory groups
- Advocacy and support services for children and young people
- Local branch of Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)